

Montana Department of
Public Health & Human Services

Section:

Best Beginnings Quality Child Care Initiatives

CHILD CARE

Subject:

Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend

References: 37.95.102, 37.95.1001-1021 ARM, 45 CFR Part 98.51 (b) (2) (ii)

**General
Information**

The Best Beginnings Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program is offered to help reduce the turnover of infant toddler certified caregivers in early childhood programs. The goal of this stipend is to maximize the continuity of care for as many infants and toddlers as possible in child care settings. Research shows that a child's ability to develop a healthy attachment to parents and other caregivers is critical for overall development. The early interactions between an infant and a primary caregiver are instrumental in shaping the child's brain, laying the foundation for future learning and emotional growth. When that relationship changes frequently or is suddenly discontinued, the development of the child's brain is also interrupted. It is vital that infants and toddlers receive responsive and nurturing care from a knowledgeable caregiver over an extended period. This is also important for parents and caregivers because building trusting relationships takes time and is the key to high quality infant toddler care.

Who May Apply

Any Montana certified infant toddler caregiver (as defined in Section 7-3a Infant/Toddler Certification) who is working a minimum of 5 hours per day (M-F) providing direct care to infants and/or toddlers in a licensed/registered facility. Additionally, the certified infant toddler caregiver must be an active participant of the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry at any level on the Career Path.

A family home provider or group home owner who has been disqualified for cause from the Child Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) may not apply for the Best Beginnings Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program.

NOTE: Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipends are awarded to individuals, not facilities. Employment at a facility that has been disqualified for cause from the CACFP does not preclude participation in this program.

**Application
Process**

Once an individual has successfully completed the appropriate training required to become a certified infant toddler caregiver (see section 7-3a for more information) they will be awarded a certificate. The Early Childhood Services Bureau mails the individual a *Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver*

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Certificate and at the same time, an application for the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program (DPHHS-HCS/CC-129a) and form W-9.

Applications for the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program will **only be accepted during the months of January and July.** Completed applications and W-9s must be received in the Early Childhood Services Bureau's office by 5 PM of the last working day of January and July, respectively. Submit Best Beginnings Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend applications to:

**Early Childhood Services Bureau
PO Box 202952
Helena, MT 59620-2952**

Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipends are awarded twice per year. Applicants will be notified within 30-days of the application due date if their application has been accepted or denied.

**Application
Evaluation and
Selection Process**

Applications will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

- ☐ Applications and W-9s must be complete and signed.
- ☐ Applicants must be active participants on the Montana Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry. A copy of their registry certificate must be attached to the application form.
- ☐ Priority for acceptance into the infant toddler caregiver stipend program will be given in the following order:
 1. Highest priority will be given to applicants who are employed in licensed or registered child care facilities who have earned either a One-Star or Two-Star quality rating.
 2. Second highest priority will be given to applicants who are employed in licensed or registered child care facilities that serve children receiving Best Beginnings child care scholarship assistance at a rate of fifty percent or more of their license capacity.
 3. The third highest priority will be given to applicants who have earned an Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Certificate and are employed in a facility that does not meet the criteria outlined in priorities one and two above.
 4. The fourth highest priority will be given to applicants who have previously completed the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver

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Stipend Program.

5. The Department reserves the right to deny any or all applications based on availability of funding.

**Program
Description &
Expectations**

The begin date for participants accepted into the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend program will be either January first or July first.

NOTE: Program participants must maintain continuous employment with the same licensed or registered child care facility for the 18-month period beginning either January 1 or July 1 to receive the total stipend of \$1,600.

Stipends are awarded in six-month increments and paid directly to the Montana certified infant toddler caregiver. A stipend is paid following the completion of each six-month period and must be requested within 30 days of the end of each six-month period.

Participants must provide direct care to infants/toddlers in the same licensed/registered child care facility for the majority of time the infants or toddlers the caregiver is responsible for attends.

**Stipend
Forfeiture**

Participation in the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program will be terminated and the stipend forfeited if any of the following occurs:

- ☐ The participant terminates their employment at any time during the 18-month stipend period.
- ☐ The facility closes at any time during the 18-month stipend period.
- ☐ CITC stipends are not transferable if a caregiver changes jobs or moves from one licensed or registered facility to another even if multiple licenses or registration certificates are under the same ownership.
 - ☐ Exceptions to this policy may be made on a case-by-case basis by contacting the Early Childhood Services Bureau Program Specialist.
- ☐ Fair hearing rights will be mailed with any termination notice.

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**Stipend Payment
Schedule**

Accepted into the program <i>January first</i>	Payment may be requested:	Stipend Amount:
After 6 months	July year-one	\$300
After 12 months	January	\$500
After 18 months	July year-two	\$800
Total one-time stipend		\$1,600
Accepted into the program <i>July first</i>	Payment may be requested:	Stipend Amount:
After 6 months	January year-one	\$300
After 12 months	July	\$500
After 18 months	January year-two	\$800
Total one-time stipend		\$1,600

**Submitting a
request for
payment**

CCUBS will generate and send a Certified Infant Toddler Stipend Summary Report form to active participants in the CITC Stipend Program approximately two weeks before the end of each six-month participation segment. The participant must complete the form and return it to the ECSB by the end of the month following the completion of the six-month segment. This report includes:

- ☐ A listing of the names and birth dates of the infants and toddlers in their care;
- ☐ An attestation of employment completed by the director/owner of the facility at which the participant works; and
- ☐ Verification that the participant remains an active member of the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry.

NOTE: Participation on the Early Care and Education Practitioner Registry may be verified on line through the Early Childhood Program's website ecp@montana.edu/personnel. A hard copy of the registry certificate is not required at this time. If a participant has allowed their registry participation to lapse, the stipend payment will be delayed until participation in the registry has been renewed.

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CCUBS Process

1. Upon receipt of an application, ECSB Contract Specialist will check to verify the applicant is entered as a Person in the CCUBS system. Review the 'Person' screen to ensure the address matches the W-9 that was submitted with the CITC stipend application. If the applicant is not entered as a Person in CCUBS, the ECSB will enter this information based on the Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver Stipend Program application and W-9.

NOTE: When navigating in CCUBS on the Contract Application screen, use the TAB key on the computer keyboard to move from box to box.

2. Applications are logged in on the CCUBS system when they are received in the ECSB office. This is done by entering information on the 'Contract Application' screen.

Applicant ID: The applicant's PS #;

Fed Fiscal Year: The appropriate federal fiscal year;

Application Date: The date that information is being entered into CCUBS;

Application Received: The date the application was date stamped;

Contract Type: Infant Toddler Stipend;

Application Status: Use the drop-down menu and select *Received*;

Effective Date: The start of the 18-month time period;

Denial Reason: Not used to enter in application requests;

End Date: The end of the 18-month time period;

Proposal Score: Not used to enter in application requests; and

Application Checklist:

Mark the *Training/Project Plan*.

Select Provider Association: Highlight selected provider in which the applicant is working for.

3. Applications are prioritized and evaluated for participation in the program.
4. After the applications have been evaluated, the ECSB Program Specialist will update the 'Contract Application' screen in CCUBS. The 'Application Status' will be changed to either *Approved* or *Denied* and saved. If the status is *Denied*, the Program Specialist will also be required to enter a Denial Reason on the screen.

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5. CCUBS will generate and automatically send an approval or denial letter to applicants.
6. Upon approval of the application, the ECSB Contract Specialist will set up the contract for all approved applicants following the steps below:
 - a. On the 'Contract Application' screen in CCUBS, double click the box in the upper right hand corner labeled *Contract No.* This action will take the worker to the 'Contract screen'.
 - b. On the Contractor tab, enter the PS# of the applicant in the white box under Person ID* and hit the TAB key.
 - c. On to the Budget tab, put the cursor in the 'Budget Section' box. Select the Infant Toddler Stipend Program from Budget Section drop down menu. **Using the mouse** move the cursor into the 'Budget Item' box and enter the following four budget items (Budget Items may be typed in word-specifically or may be selected from a list using the F9 key):
 - ☐ *6-Month Stipend*, hit the TAB key and type \$300.
 - ☐ *12-Month Stipend*, hit the TAB key and type \$500.
 - ☐ *18-Month Stipend*, hit the TAB key and type \$800.
 - ☐ *Advances*, hit the TAB key and type in 0.
 - ☐ Click on the SAVE icon.

At this point, CCUBS will SAVE the screen with a Contract Number.
 - d. On the 'Contract Details' tab select the Contract Status drop down menu: highlight 2. *Negotiation Complete*, and SAVE; highlight 3. *Final In-Route Signatures*, and SAVE; highlight 4. *Mailed*, and SAVE; lastly highlight 5. *Executed*, and SAVE.
7. Two-weeks prior to the end of each six-month segment, CCUBS will mail an automatic notice, the *Best Beginnings Infant Toddler Stipend Summary form*, to each approved applicant. The applicant must return the form to the ECSB by the end of the month following the completion of the six-month segment.
8. A termination notice will be sent out 10-days prior to terminating an applicant's participation in this program for not complying with program policies. Fair hearing rights will be sent with the termination notice.

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**What If
Scenarios For
Applicants/
Application
Problem
Resolution
Process Or
Denial Reasons**

- If a *program applicant is not a Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver*, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will contact the caregiver by phone and verify their status. If it is determined that the individual is indeed a certified infant toddler caregiver, the Quality Specialist will enter the appropriate status on the 'Person Montana' screen and the Contract Specialist will be notified to continue the application process.

If the applicant has not completed the requirements to become a Certified Infant Toddler Caregiver, the application will be denied.

- If a *CITC program applicant is not associated with the facility specified on the application*, the Quality Specialist will call the applicant to determine which licensed or registered facility the applicant is actually working for. The Quality Specialist will:

Inform the owner/director of the facility *indicated on the application* that their staff listing is not up to date.

Inform the owner/director of the facility that *the applicant is erroneously attached to* that their staff listing is not up to date.

Each owner/director must then contact the local QAD child care licenser and request that the provider staff screen be updated.

- If *the CITC program applicant is not associated with any facility*, the Quality Specialist will call the applicant to determine which licensed or registered facility the applicant is working for. The Quality Specialist will then:
 - Instruct the applicant to discuss this matter with their owner/director. (The Quality Specialist may choose to contact the owner/director directly as in the example listed above).

The owner/director must then contact the local QAD child care licenser and request that the provider staff screen be updated. Once this is done, the Contract Specialist will be notified by the Quality Specialist to complete the application process.

If the applicant is not working for a licensed or registered child care facility, the application will be denied.

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- *If during the application login or contract payment process the facility license/registration is determined to be inactive*, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will notify the owner/director that their license/registration is inactive and it will be the responsibility of the provider to correct this. Once the correction has been made the provider will notify the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will then instruct the Contract Specialist to complete the application or payment process.

If the facility at which an applicant is employed is not licensed or registered, the application will be denied.

**What If
Scenarios For
Program
Participants/
Termination Of
Program
Participation**

- *If a program participant is not currently associated with the same provider as was entered on the application*, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will determine if the participant has changed jobs and is now working for a different provider. If this is the case, a 10-day termination notice will be sent to the participant and their CITC contract will be closed.
- *If a program participant is not currently associated with a provider*, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will determine if the participant has quit their job. If this is the case, a 10-day termination notice will be sent to the participant and their CITC contract will be closed.
- *If a program participant is not currently associated with a Licensed or Registered Provider*, an alert will be sent to the Quality Specialist. The Quality Specialist will determine if the facility at which a CITC participant was employed, lost their license or registration certificate, or went out of business. If this is the case, a 10-day termination notice will be sent to the participant and their CITC contract will be closed.

**Definitions &
Special
Requirements**

Infant: A child under the age of 24 months.

Toddler: A child who is 24 months of age to 36 months of age.

Slot: Full time care, 6-10 hours per day, 30 or more hours per week on a regular basis.

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Ratios: Facilities must follow the appropriate staff to child ratios as outlined in the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) for infant care 37.95.1000-1021 – INFANT ONLY FACILITIES -

- ☐ Each facility caring for infants shall maintain a staff ratio of one caregiver for each (4) four infants in attendance.
- ☐ Each infant shall be assigned one primary caregiver.
- ☐ There shall be sufficient staff so that an adult is always present and supervising.

DEFINITIONS

(3) “Family day care home” means a place in which supplemental parental care is provided to three to six children, no more than 3 children less than 2 years of age unless care is provided for infants only. For places providing care only for infants, “family day care home” means a place in which supplemental parental care is provided for up to 4 infants. No other children shall be in attendance.

(5) “Group day care home” means a place in which supplemental parental care is provided to 7 to 12 children on a regular basis unless care is provided for infants only. For places providing care only for infants, “group day care home” means a place in which supplemental parental care is provided for up to 8 infants. No other children shall be in attendance. The staff: infant ratio applies to group day care homes.

